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ACCURACY OF INTERPERSONAL PERCEPTION--A FUNCTION OF SUPERORDINATE ROLE.

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ONE ASPECT OF THE PERCEPTUAL ACCURACY OF STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR SUPERVISORS IN JUDGING THEIR INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS WAS EXPLORED. A FIELD STUDY OF 40 STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERVISING TEACHERS EXPLORED THE POSSIBILITY OF SUBORDINATE ROLE BEING A CORRELATE TO THE ACCURACY OF THEIR INTERPERSONAL PERCEPTION. AT THE END OF 6 WEEKS OF WORKING CONTACT, THE SUBJECTS WERE ADMINISTERED THE "FIRO-B" SCALE INTENDED TO MEASURE THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE SUBJECT WANTS TO RECEIVE INCLUSION, CONTROL, AND AFFECTION. THE SUBJECTS WERE ASKED TO COMPLETE THE SCALE ONCE TO REVEAL THEIR FEELINGS AND ONCE TO REACT AS THEY THOUGHT THEIR RESPECTIVE SUPERVISOR OR STUDENT TEACHER WOULD REACT. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA SHOWED THAT SUPERVISING TEACHERS WERE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE ACCURATE THAN STUDENT TEACHERS IN ESTIMATING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTROL NEEDS OF THEIR COUNTERPARTS. THE AUTHOR CONCLUDED THAT FOR A SUPERORDINATE TO SUCCESSFULLY PERFORM THE ROLE, THAT PERSON MUST PERCEPTUALLY SELECT ONLY THOSE CUES FROM INTERACTION WITH IMMEDIATE SUBORDINATES THAT PERTAIN TO THE CONTROL NEEDS OF THE SUBORDINATES. (AL)

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The objectives of this paper are (1) to set forth some findings from recent research undertaken by the present writer[1] and, (2) by means of an ex post facto analysis, to explore the possibility of generally accounting for these findings within organizational role theory and, more specifically, within an integrative conceptual scheme of the school recently advanced by Willower and others.[2]

Description of the Study

A field study[3] exploring a number of variables thought to be related to accuracy of interpersonal perception investigated the possibility of superordinate role being a correlate of such accuracy. The study examined the perceptions of 40 student teachers and their respective public school supervising teachers. The student teachers were senior and post graduate students at the University of Akron who were enrolled for practice teaching at the secondary level during the spring semester, 1965.

After the student teachers and their respective public school supervising teachers had been in close and continuous working contact for a period of eight weeks, the Schutz FIRO-B Scale[4] and other

instruments were administered to the subjects. FIRO-B purports to measure the degree of expressed or wanted inclusion, control, and affection needs possessed by a subject. These three psychological need dimensions (inclusion, control, and affection), it is believed, are most crucial in establishing interpersonal relationships.[5]

During the administration of the instruments, subjects were first requested to complete the FIRO-B Scale in such a manner as to reveal truthfully their own individual feelings. Each subject was then administered the FIRO-B Scale again, under instructions to react as he imagined his respective supervising teacher or student teacher might react to the instrument. Because of the seeming transparency of FIRO-B, most subjects displayed great confidence in their ability to predict the other person's reaction to the instrument.

The measure of perceptual accuracy in estimating interpersonal needs consisted of an index of the difference between the total score on each dimension registered by the target person on the FIRO-B protocol and the dimension score predicted for that person by the subject. The accuracy indices were dichotomized with zero to one point missed in estimating an alter's score being compared to two or more points missed. Each of the three FIRO-B dimensions consists of two nine-point scales; one measures the degree to which the subject <u>desires to express</u> inclusion, control, or affection and the other measures the degree to which the subject <u>wants to receive</u> inclusion, control, or affection.

In order to assess the reliability of the FIRO-B Scale which consists of three Guttman scales (see above), a scalogram analysis was performed on the scores obtained by the supervising teachers and student teachers of the study sample. All three dimensions of FIRO-B (inclusion, control, and affection) achieved coefficients of scalability at, or greater than, .65, and in no case did coefficients of reproducibility fall below .76.

Chi-square analyses of the FIRO-B accuracy indices of supervising teachers as compared to those of the student teachers indicated that on the inclusion and affection dimensions there were no significant differences (expressed inclusion: chi-square = 2.50, $p<.20$, df= 1; wanted inclusion: chi-square = 3.30, $p<.10$, df = 1; expressed affection: chi-square = .20, $p<.70$, df = 1; wanted affection: chi-square = .49, $p<.50$, df = 1.). On the control dimension, however, supervising teachers were significantly more likely to be accurate in their estimates of their student teacher's personality needs than was conversely the case (expressed control: chi-square = 8.47, $p<.01$, df = 1; wanted control: chi-square = 24.21, $p<.001$, df = 1.).[6] See Table 1. (Insert Table 1 here.) No stereotypy of response was noted on target or estimate protocols of FIRO-B for either group of subjects.

Discussion

That the productive yield of studies in the general area of social sensitivity or accuracy of interpersonal perception has been less than hoped for has been attested to by a number of authorities

Table 1. Comparison of accuracy scores for supervising teachers and student teachers on FIRO-B, expressed and wanted inclusion, control, and affection.

FIRO-B accuracy scores	Student teachers N	Supervising teachers N	Chi-square (df = 1)
Expressed inclusion			
0 - 1	14	20	2.50, p<.20
2 - 9	26	20	
Wanted inclusion			
0 - 1	13	20	3.30, p<.10
2 - 9	27	20	
Expressed control			
0 - 1	15	27	8.47, p<.01
2 - 9	25	13	
Wanted control			
0 - 1	9	30	24.21, p<.001
2 - 9	31	10	
Expressed affection			
0 - 1	16	17	.20, p<.70
2 - 9	24	23	
Wanted affection			
0 - 1	13	15	.49, p<.50
2 - 9	27	25	

in the field.[7] It is thought that one among various contributing factors has been the tendency of researchers to overlook the relevancy of the particular stimulus to be judged. Bruner and Tagiuri have suggested that more research is required about the kinds of information or cues actually used by people in judging emotions and traits or in forming impressions. To what degree are situational factors important in narrowing the range of possible alternative ways in which a person will be judged? To what extent is the role relation between perceiver and perceived a constraining factor?[8] Hastorf, Richardson, and Dornbusch have proposed that experimenters have set the categories the subject must employ with little concern for the relevance of these to the subject's cognitive map of other people.[9]

The present research attempted to avoid this particular empirical pitfall by investigating the possible impact of organizational role upon the interpersonal perceptions of the incumbents.

Why, in the present study, were supervising teachers found significantly more likely than student teachers to be accurate in estimating the psychological control needs of their dyadic alters? Why did supervising teachers exhibit this comparative hypersensitivity to control needs as contrasted with relatively moderate recognition of the inclusion and affection needs of their student teachers?

It is thought probable that the very hierarchical nature of the interpersonal relationship between supervising teacher and student teacher is responsible for the supervising teachers' mode of perception. That the role of supervising teacher is superior to super-

ordinate to the role of student teacher is obvious and beyond debate. It is implicit in role theory that successful role performance requires proper encoding of, and subsequent appropriate action upon, the expectations of the role senders in one's role set. Thus, successful performance of the superordinate role dictates that the incumbent of this role be particularly sensitive to those elements in the interactional situation which are most closely related to such performance, screening out other unrelated factors. In the present instance, this assumes the existence of the control expectation.

Jones and Thibaut[10] have proposed that we interact with others within fairly well-defined situations and in terms of rather constraining roles. Our main requirement, therefore, is for information relevant to adequate role performance, and, fortunately for cognitive economy, we need not be indiscriminately attentive to all the cues provided by the other actors. Bruner and Tagiuri[11] suggest that there is a tencency for one to notice those things about another that affect the fate of an interaction. Chowdhry and Newcomb[12] found that insofar as the trait to be judged is important in the interpersonal relation of judge and judged it will be more easily judged.

That organizational role seems to be a determinant of the perceptions of incumbents is perhaps best empirically supported by Lieberman.[13] Kelley[14] found that by giving his judges different role expectations (leader, follower or unspecified) they would concern themselves with different aspects of the stimulus persons. Katz and Kahn,[15] in a recent treatment of open-system organizational theory,

point out that research on the differential perceptions of supervisors and subordinates shows consistently that role or position in the organization is related to perceptions no less than to attitudes and values.

While, on the one hand, the foregoing discussion has proposed superordinate role as a probable determinant of the supervising teachers' sensitivity to the control needs of their subordinate alters, on the other hand, it has merely served to beg the question of why, in the specific instance of the school as an organization, superordinates are more sensitive to these particular needs.

In analyzing the present data this researcher was impressed by the supervising teachers' relative unanimity in accuracy for predicting the control needs of their subordinates. It was apparent that supervising teachers strongly share this preoccupation for control. This finding would seem to corroborate a recent statement by one observer[16] that, despite increasing talk of organizational innovation, the school still perhaps best exemplifies the Weberian model. One of the several salient attributes characterizing Weberian bureaucratic structure is that the organization of offices follow the principle of hierarchy; that is, each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one.[17]

As Etzioni points out, all social units have a structure and control their members, but organizations have a distinct structure and their problem of control is especially acute. The participants need to be supervised, the supervisors themselves need supervision, and so on, all the way to the top of the organization. In this

sense, the organizational structure is one of control, and the hierarchy of control is the most central element of the organizational structure.[18] Zaleznik, in describing the impact of this hierarchy of control on interpersonal relationships within organizations, has noted that the interaction of two individuals in a superior-subordinate relationship is built on some sort of deference pattern that reflects the different positions of influence each person holds with respect to the other.[19] In a variation on the social contract theme, March and Simon have pointed out that in joining the organization one accepts an authority relation; i.e., he agrees that within some limits he will accept as the premises of his behavior orders and instructions supplied to him by the organization.[20]

Kahn and others further state that the relative positions of any two persons within the total organizational structure determine to a considerable degree the relations which will obtain between them.[21] Subsequent empirical research has corroborated the explicit effect of the organizational hierarchy upon incumbents of various positions. It has been found that a focal person (within an organization) receives the greatest amount of pressure from his direct superiors and that, among the superior role senders in the same chain of command as the focal person, sent pressure does not increase with status, but, on the contrary, the immediate supervisor sends more pressure than does the supervisor's supervisor.[22]

Descending to a lower level of theoretical abstraction, with the school more specifically in mind, Willower has proposed[23] that public

schools, like prisons and public mental hospitals, fall into that category of organizations which enjoy little or no control over client selection and where clients enjoy little or no choice concerning their participation. As a result, schools are likely to manifest, in varying degrees, control concerns with clients. In his study of a large public junior high school, Willower was struck by the salience of pupil control problems. They appeared to play a central role in teacher-teacher and teacher-administrator relationships. One of six propositions generated by Willower's integrative scheme was that those directly responsible for the control of clients will have more favorable attitudes concerning the use of external controls than will those less directly responsible for client control.[24] This hypothesis has subsequently been tested empirically and found to be tenable.[25]

Is it possible in the instance of the present research findings (the preoccupation of the supervising teachers with the control needs of their student teachers) that this represents a transference of the client control ideology from the operational level existing between teacher and pupil to that existing between supervising teacher and student teacher? Considering Willower's integrative scheme, is it possible that this client control ideology, rather than being restricted in application to clients as such, is manifested in actual practice at every interactional level within the entire school organization? More properly, does this concern for control pervade each interactional linkage between immediate superior and subordinate throughout the school organizational hierarchy? Does this control

orientation operate to structure the perceptions of teachers interacting with their pupils as well as supervisors interacting with teachers, principals with teachers, and higher administrators with principals? Might not this phenomenon, then, rather than client (pupil) control ideology, be better designated as subordinate control ideology, a term more appropriately referring to the concern for control which every organizational superordinate manifests for his immediate subordinate?

The following citations from research on educational organizations in particular indicate that this indeed may be the case.

Medsker found that the behaviors of effective principals as perceived by teachers emphasized that the effective principal "maintains firm but constructive control of the faculty so there is adherence to school regulations."[26] In assessing staff member's responses to administrative behavior, Congreve found that the formal, impersonal approach to administration was preferred rather than the informal, personal approach.[27] In another study, Moser discovered that school superintendents who profess nomothetic behavior are given the highest effectiveness ratings by principals and enjoy the confidence of principals more and, in addition, that principals expect superintendents to be transactional with emphasis upon the nomothetic.[28] In a study of educators' attitudes toward administrative rules, duties, and policies, Smith found that superintendents, principals, and teachers all preferred a behavior style described as "The Impersonal Style."[29] The impersonal style represents the person who sees authority and expert opinion at the top of the hierarchy of values with himself as the representative of that authority.

Conclusions

It is apparent that the present writer has proceeded far beyond his immediate data in making the foregoing analysis. There is, however, a need for just such speculation in the particular instance of research on social sensitivity or accuracy of interpersonal perception, for, as Bruner and Tagiuri have pointed out, research in this area "has been somewhat hindered by an excess of empirical enthusiasm and perhaps a deficit of theoretical surmise."[30]

In the preceding discussion, a theoretical case has been built for the existence of a control orientation on the behalf of every organizational superordinate in his interaction with immediate subordinates. It has been postulated that this control concern pervades each immediate superior-subordinate linkage within the structural context of the organization and results, in fact, from the very nature of the hierarchical structure of the organization within which such interaction takes place. Quite simply put, it appears that, in order to successfully perform the superordinate role, the incumbent of such a role must view the results of interaction with immediate subordinates through a reduction screen, perceptually filtering out only those particular cues which pertain to the control needs of subordinates. This interpretation receives general support from Steiner's work.[31] Accurate cognition of subordinate control needs presumably enables the superordinate to maintain his respective leader role within the organization. He remains an effective channel through which the flow of organizational authority can be transmitted.

In addition to directing attention to the present writer's findings that supervising teachers display an apparent control oreintation toward their student teachers, Willower's recent observations and resulting integrative scheme concerning teachers' client (pupil)-control ideology were examined. Other studies were cited which seem to indicate generally that subordinates at every hierarchical level within the school as an organization expect their immediate superiors to control them, at least insofar as seeing to it that the institutional norms of the organization are maintained. A more broadly focused study was cited demonstrating empirically that subordinates are subjected to most pressure by their immediate superiors in the organizational hierarchy.

In light of these findings, it was suggested that Willower's integrative conceptual scheme of control ideology, rather than being applicable to merely the client or pupil level, might be expanded to embrace the concept of control orientation within each immediate superordinate-subordinate interactional linkage throughout the entire hierarchical structure of the organization. By virtue of its higher level of abstraction, it would appear that this theory possesses more explanatory power and is able to encompass Willower's scheme as a system of postulates within its broader scope of theory.

Contrasted with Willower's view, the present theory sees the client as an integral part of the organizational structure, rather than as an adjunctive entity upon which the organization operates, as Willower's scheme seems to imply. Also, the present writer has declined to explore the various and diverse means of controlling

subordinates' behavior within the organization -- such consideration was not seen as relevant to the development of the theory. The writer is, nonetheless, cognizant of their existence[32] and, moreover, their importance with other contexts.

Finally, the present theoretical specualtion has confined itself to the more classical Weberian perspective concerning formal organizational structure, authority, and their probable effects upon incumbents of organizational roles. It has not attempted to incorporate the more comprehensive points of view afforded by organizational theories and concepts of more recent currency. This is not intended as a denial of the validity or utilitarian worth of more modern-day conceptions, but rather does point to the residual explanatory and predictive power yet remaining (though ofttimes unrecognized) in the more restricted classical organizational theory. As schools and school districts continue to become larger, the strain toward bureaucracy and organizational formalism grows more intense. The Weberian conception can increasingly be called upon to explain and examine the anomalies attendant to such growth.

Implications

It is imperative that further research employing the FIRO-B Scale be undertaken to empirically test the present theory that superordinates are more likely to be accurate than their immediate subordinates in estimating the control needs of their dyadic alters. Such investigations should be aimed at the operational levels existing between teachers and pupils, principals and teachers, and superintendents and principals.

If the present theory holds and interpersonal relations between immediate organizational superiors and subordinates seem to be stultified or fixated at the control level of interaction, then questions relating to the functionality of dysfunctionality of certain psychological needs to such a type of interpersonal relationship should be explored.

Further, questions relating to the disjunctive and antithetical effect between organizational control and professional autonomy need to be asked.

Finally, the present theory suggests a perspective from which to view and possibly contribute some understanding of accuracy in interpersonal perception. It is the feeling of Bruner and Tagiuri that more research is needed in this area, that only a beginning has been made in studying the manner in which the nature of an interaction affects judgment. As they further state, if there is to be a science of interpersonal behavior, it will rest upon a cornerstone of social perception. If for this reason only, far more effort must be expended on the task of discovering how people come to perceive other people as they do.[33]

FOOTNOTES

[1]The findings reported in this paper are drawn from data collected in 1965 during a pilot study by Robert B. Brumbaugh, Kenneth C. Hoedt, and William H. Beisel, Jr. The study was supported by a research grant (RG-85) from the University of Akron. Certain other data from the pilot study are soon to be reported in Robert B. Brumbaugh, Kenneth C. Hoedt, and William H. Beisel, Jr., "Teacher Dogmatism and Perceptual Accuracy," Journal of Teacher Education (forthcoming).

[2]See Donald J. Willower, "Hypotheses on the School as a Social System," Educational Administration Quarterly, I (Autumn, 1965); D. J. Willower and R. G. Jones, "When Pupil Control Becomes an Institutional Theme," Phi Delta Kappan, XLV (November, 1963); and D. J. Willower, Terry L. Eidell, and Wayne K. Hoy, The School and Pupil Control Ideology (forthcoming monograph).

[3]Brumbaugh, Hoedt and Beisel, op. cit.

[4]William C. Schutz, FIRO: A Three-Dimensional Theory of Interpersonal Behavior (New York: Rinehart, 1958).

[5]Schutz has defined compatibility potential in terms of three interpersonal need areas. Schutz's FIRO ("fundamental interpersonal relations orientation") theory states that most of an individual's interpersonal behavior is determined by his needs in three interpersonal areas called inclusion, control, and affection. These need areas may represent either an expression or a want. Potential compatibility in dyads, without benefit of an actual vis-a-vis encounter between two people, can be predicted by matching both individuals' FIRO-B Scale self-report protocols with regard to the three interpersonal need areas as expressed or wanted behaviors. The degree to which two individuals' FIRO-B test protocols complement each other (degree of fit) determines the degree of potential compatibility likely to be the result of such dyadic interaction.

The theory and findings of Schutz, derived largely from psychoanalytic theory, suggest that one's inner needs for inclusion, control, and affection predispose one toward more compatible relations with those persons whose inner needs most nearly complement or satisfice one's own inner needs. Thus, a person with a great need for expressing inclusion to others would be most compatible with those who have a great want or desire for inclusion. This would likewise follow in the other need areas of control and affection.

According to Schutz, these interpersonal needs are derived from one's childhood associations with parents and significant others, and are relatively invariant throughout one's life.

When interpersonal relationships are initiated, and continued, they proceed sequentially through the stages of inclusion, control, and affection. Conversely, when interpersonal relationships break down or deteriorate, they do so in inverse order -- first, the relationship becomes ineffectual in the affection stage, next, the control stage, and finally, the inclusion stage.

[6]The chi-square statistic for superordinate-subordinate role (supervising teachers vs. student teachers) on accuracy was collapsed and comparative analyses were indivudally computed for sex on accuracy for both groups. Also, a comparative analysis of age on accuracy for supervising teachers was made. In all cases no significant differences were found. The possibility, however, that age constitutes a confounding factor on accuracy for the supervising teachers, when compared with the student teachers, cannot be discounted.

[7]See, for example, J. S. Bruner and Renato Tagiuri, "The Perception of People," in Gardner Lindzey (ed.), Handbook of Social Psychology (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954), I, p. 649 and Albert H. Hastorf, Stephen A. Richardson, and Sanford M. Dornbusch, "The Problem of Relevance in the Study of Person Perception," in Renato Tagiuri and Luigi Petrullo (ed.), Person Perception and Interpersonal Behavior (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 54.

[8]Bruner and Tagiuri, op. cit., p. 650.

[9]Hastorf, Richardson, and Dornbusch, op. cit., p. 56.

[10]Edward E. Jones and John W. Thibaut, "Interaction Goals as Bases of Inference in Interpersonal Perception," in R. Tagiuri and T. Petrullo, op. cit., p. 152.

[11]Bruner and Tagiuri, op. cit., p. 642.

[12]Kalma Chowdhry and T. M. Newcomb, "The Relative Abilities of Leaders and Non-Leaders to Estimate Opinions of Their Own Groups," Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, XLVII (1952).

[13]S. Lieberman, "The Effects of Changes in Roles on the Attitudes of Role Occupants," Human Relations, IX (1956).

[14]H. H. Kelley, "First Impressions in Interpersonal Relations" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1948).

[15]Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966), p. 188.

[16]Conrad Briner, in a seminar at the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration, University of Oregon, February 7, 1966.

[17]Max Weber (Talcott Parsons, ed.; A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, trans.), The Theory of Social and Economic Organization (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 329-330.

[18]Amitai Etzioni, "Organizational Control Structure," in James G. March (ed.), Handbook of Organizations (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1965), p. 650.

[19]Abraham Zaleznik, "Interpersonal Relations in Organizations," in March, op. cit., p. 589.

[20]James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, Organizations (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), p. 90.

[21]Robert L. Kahn, Donald M. Wolfe, Robert P. Quinn, and J. Diedrick Snoek, Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), p. 167.

[22]Kahn, et al., op. cit., p. 184.

[23]Willower, op. cit., pp. 40-51.

[24]Ibid., p. 45.

[25]See Terry L. Eidell, "The Development and Test of a Measure of the Pupil Control Ideology of Public School Professional Staff Members," (unpublished D. Ed. thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, 1965) and Wayne K. Hoy, "Dogmatism and Pupil Control Ideology of Public School Professional Personnel," (unpublished D. Ed. thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, 1965).

[26]Leland L. Medsker, "The Job of the Elementary School Principal as Viewed by Teachers," (unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, School of Education, Stanford University, 1954) as reported in "Teachers and Parents Describe the Effective Principal's Behavior," Administrator's Notebook, VI (September, 1955), p. 3.

[27]Willard J. Congreve, "Administrative Behavior and Staff Relations," Administrator's Notebook, VI (October, 1957).

[28]Robert P. Moser, "The Leadership Patterns of School Superintendents and School Principals," Administrator's Notebook, VI (September, 1957).

[29]T. Edison Smith, "Leadership Attitudes of Teachers and Administrators in Minnesota Schools," (unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, Graduate School, University of North Dakota, 1953) as reported in Administrator's Notebook, III (September, 1954).

[30]Bruner and Tagiuri, op. cit., p. 650.

[31]I. Steiner, "Interpersonal Behavior as Influenced by Accuracy of Social Perception," Psychological Review, LXII (1955), pp. 268-275.

[32]See, for example, Amitai Etzioni, Modern Organizations (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964), pp. 58-67 and Peter M. Blau and W. Richard Scott, Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 176-183.

[33]Bruner and Tagiuri, op. cit., p. 650.